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ABSTRACT

Plato's "Republic" and George Orwell's "1984" both posit visionary worlds, one where humans are virtuous and understand what Plato refers to as "the Good," and the other where citizens are pawns of a government which uses language as a form of tyranny and control. Despite these overarching differences in philosophical assumptions, Plato's world is essentially an alternate version of the tyranny found in "1984." Plato's utopia is a world where virtue reigns and where people have actually achieved his conception of the Good, not because they are protected from evil, but because the state redefines the Good in such a way as to incorporate evil. Orwell's world, with the benefit of 2,500 years of history to shape his conception of human behavior, paints a much more realistic picture of life in a world operating under Platonic authoritarian control and Platonic assumptions. Orwell's conception includes the notion that people will rebel under such a government unless they are tightly controlled, either by language or by physical oppression. His vision in "1984," then, resembles Plato's in the amount of control exercised over the populace, but operates under the belief that humans will not control their governing power with implicit virtue but will become corrupt and govern unwilling masses by force. (Thirty-six footnotes are included.) (JC)

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From Plato to Orwell:
Utopian Rhetoric in a Dystopian World

a debut paper presented

to the Student Section

of the

Speech Communication Association

by

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Student Section
Debut Paper

In 1948 George Orwell posited his vision of a future world where thought was a crime and where men and women alike were mesmerized into worship of a mythical figure known only as Big Brother. Hailed by many as a prophetic description of our own future, Orwell's 1984 depicts a world where the state uses language as its primary tool for control of thought and subsequent oppression. 2,500 years earlier Plato argued for his vision of an ideal state, one where Philosopher-Kings ruled over willing masses who were protected from evil by a unified Guardian class. Plato's hope in writing the Republic was to create a world where virtue reigned and where men and women had actually achieved his conception of the Good.

At first glance, these two works appear to have little in common. Plato is concerned with creating a utopian world, while Orwell is trying to alert the world to its collision course with an unimaginably horrible oppression. In reality, though, my contention is that there is little essential difference between Plato and Orwell. The purpose of this essay is to compare and contrast the Republic with 1984. This comparison should provide some insight as to the purpose of and implications for utopian and dystopian rhetoric. Ultimately, I will defend the position that a Platonic view of rhetoric and language necessarily implies that authoritarian institutions will prevail, insuring not that the masses are protected from evil, but rather that the

state redefines the Good in such a way as to incorporate evil. In short, Plato, despite the best of intentions, sets the stage for Orwell's nightmarish view of the future.

In accordance with the proposed thesis, this analysis aims to answer three questions. First, rhetorically speaking, what functions do utopias and dystopias serve? This question implicitly requires a definition of these competing worldviews, as well as a contrast of the characteristics of each. Second, how are Plato's Republic and Orwell's 1984 similar? Dissimilar? In what way is Plato's Republic similar to Owrell's Party? What role does rhetoric play in each society and what relationship does it have to the appropriate institutional arrangements? How are these components different? What is it precisely that makes the Republic the classic example of a utopia and 1984 a classic example of a dystopia? It is this critical difference that best illustrates the subversiveness that is explicit in 1984 and is inevitable in the Republic. This comparison will depend, to a large extent, on two concepts introduced by Kenneth Burke: Definition of Man, and the Iron Law of History. Each of these concepts will be explained and defended as tools for criticism in the method section. Finally, what are the implications for utopias and dystopias as rhetorical devices? In what way do they influence the course of political rhetoric today?

Utopian and Dystopian Worldviews

A general perspective on the rhetorical functions of utopias and dystopias requires at least a cursory examination of the literature on utopian thought. If we are to understand the similar rhetorical strategeis employed by Plato and Orwell, we ought first begin with a preview of the characteristics of the worlds typically described as utopian and anti-utopian. In other words, in a broader societal sense, what is meant by, or implied within, a utopian vision? How is this vision characteristically different from the typically appocolyptic picture portrayed in a dystopian work?

There are conflicting thoughts about what constitutes a utopian wordview. Indeed, for over 2,500 years respected political and philosophical thinkers have posited different visions of the ideal state, each implying a slightly different definition of the term. Goodwin and Taylor have articulated perhaps the most common definition:

> Above all, utopia denotes an elaborate vision of the good life in a perfect society which is viewed as an integrated totality: such a vision transcends normal idealism, and is inevitably at varience with the imperfections of existing society and so, per se, constitutes a critique of social institutions.1

A utopian vision, then, implies more than a move away from some existing evil. Rather, the solution typically

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1Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor, The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1982), p. 16.

addresses the institutional cause of evil, devising instead a society where evil is defined out of existence.

If utopia is perfection, then dystopia is perhaps best described as perfection gone arye. Walsh describes dystopia, or inverted utopia, as ". . .an imaginary society presented as inferior to any civilized society that actually exists."2 Thus, dystopian works are the opposite of utopian worlds. A non-utopian work does not necessarily qualify as dystopian. To some extent, of course, this perspective is self-defining; in fact, it is simplistic. But it does serve the advantage of providing a clear dichotomy with which to contrast and classify competing works. For our purposes, it is a definition that limits the total body of literature and makes criticism possible.

These definitions provide some insight as to the rhetorical function of utopian and anti-utopian works. Utopian rhetoric is intended as a promise of a better existence. In that regard, it can be a catalyst for social change. Goodwin and Taylor argue:

> The utopian merely asks that man should be sufficiently bold to formulate in advance an image of the kind of social future he considers desirable, so that he can then exert some definite control over his destiny. . . .(I)n this respect utopias perform a most valuable role by helping to reveal quite clearly what form of society is ethically, and perhaps asthetically, most desirable as a goal worth striving for.3

2Chad Walsh, From Utopia to Nightmare (Harper & Rowe: New York and Evanston, 1962), p. 26.

3Goodwin and Taylor, p. 252.

By providing a vision of the good life that can be had, utopian rhetoric encourages activists to work toward a better end. This position, of course, does not require individuals to work for abolition of existing institutional structures. Some may respond in that manner. But a more realistic utopian rhetoric motivates the individual to act internally, striving for an inner sense of perfection that requires only compliance with some utopian model. It is in this way that utopian writers hope to influence the course of human action and, for some, to raise the level of human consciousness about the world around them.

Dystopian rhetoric appeals more to the immediacy and urgency of society's pending doom. Implicit in the picture of dystopia is a warning that mankind's present course will give way to the unimaginable horror depicted in the work. In that regard, there is a greater appeal for both individual and collective action by the members of society. Walsh has employed a biblical metaphor to illustrate the point:

> I submit in addition that many of the dystopian writers are the prophets of our times. I use the word prophet in something of its biblical sense, to mean one who observes society, evaluates it in accordance with principles he considers eternal, and offers messages of warning where he sees it going astray; messages not merely of warning but predictions of the wrath to come unless society renounces its false turnings. If Amos, Hosea, Isaiah or Jeremiah were alive, I think it probable that they would be writing and publishing inverted utopias. It is the prophetic form of our age.4

4Walsh, p. 135.

Ultimately, then, dystopian rhetoric, like utopian rhetoric, serves to motivate action. The difference, of course, is in the relative states of necessity that characterize the need for change. The audience of a utopian work begins with the understanding that their present existence is at least a tolerable one. While conditions may be far from ideal, they do not necessarily require immediate action for mankind's continued existence. In a dystopian world, the implication is that absent some sort of change the state of human existence will in some way be fundamentally and irreversibly altered in a negative way.

Characteristically, utopian and dystopian rhetorics are fundamentally different in two ways. First, each takes a different view of the use of power. Utopian writers typically view power as a means to an end. The state uses power to help its subjects achieve a greater goal. Tillich has described power in a utopia as:

> . . .(T)he power of man in his wholeness--the power of man to push out of the ground of discontent, his ontological discontent, in all directions of being, where the economic plays no greater role than any other factor. The bearers of utopia are those who are able to transform reality, and it is in them that the power of utopia is anchored.5

Dystopias, by contrast, provide no transcending aim for the use of power. There is no ultimate good for either the state or the individual. The state seeks power for its own purposes. Sullivan sucinctly contrasted these perspectives:

5Paul Tillich, "Critique and Justification of Utopia," Utopias and Utopian Thought (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1965), Frank E. Manuel, ed., p. 299.

> The utopians see assigned or assumed work as logical and imperative for the attainment of the common good; the dystopians perceive it as the logical source from which tyranny and dehumanization will inevitably flow.6

Fundamentally, then, utopias are distinct from dystopias in their beginning assumptions. Utopia is the ultimate good. Dystopia is a recognition that the ultimate good can not be realized.

A second related contrast between utopian and dystopian works concerns the way in which each perspective treats reality. Both perspectives are, to borrow Burke's term, "rotten with perfection."7 That is to say that utopian visions define reality perfectly, while dystopian worlds represent the inevitable corruption of a perfect world. Herein lies the central point of disagreement between utopian and dystopian thinkers. Utopian visionaries see reality as fundamentally alterable. They can define away irrationality in utopia. Dystopian thinkers, on the other hand, view man's irrationality as inherently corrupting. Simecka describes a utopian perspective for defining reality:

> Utopias are the products of the human brain, to take Koestler's definition of the human brain as a superstructure over the animal. Utopias are a symptom

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6E.D.S. Sullivan, "Place in No Place: Examples of Ordered Society in Literature," The Utopian Vision (San Diego State Univ. Press: San Diego, 1983), E.D.S. Sullivan, ed., p. 32.

7Kenneth Burke, "Definition of Man," Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method (University of California Press: Berkely, 1966), p. 16.

> of all man's unnatural endeavours, a product of the unnatural animal, the being which has rebelled against Nature, which attempts to subjugate and change it. Utopias are an expression of transcendence. . . .8

Dystopian writers take a far more fatalistic view of the nature and rationality of mankind. They see man as inherently selfish, motivated primarily by concern for himself rather than for society as a whole. In fact, dystopian writers criticize utopian rhetoric on the grounds that it fails to account for the true nature of mankind. Goodwin and Taylor summarize the argument:

> Almost all criticism of utopianism rests on the assertion that men could not behave in certain ways, or that certain institutions are indispensable to human society and that certain worlds are therefore a priori impossible. . . .(A)ll parts of the world are so inextricably connected that the utopian's proposed changes would be impossible: society without aggression, egotism, private property, marriage and so on would be inconceivable.9

Ultimately, dystopian thought rejects the thesis that man is rational, instead concluding, in varying degrees, that the essence of man is inconsistent with perfection. Walsh concludes:

> Similarly, the inverted utopias imply that there are limits to the malleability of man's nature. Certainly, within very broad limits, he can be trained to be warlike or peaceful, comtemplative or activistic--but the limits still exist. For instance, as we have seen earlier, if he tries to become as the angels, his weakened body will be at last his undoing, if he has

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8Milan Simecka, "A World With Utopias or Without Them?," Utopias (Ebenezer Baylis & Sons: Worchester, Great Britian, 1984), Peter Alexander and Roger Gill, eds., p. 172.

9Goodwin and Taylor, pp. 212-13.

> not first been destroyed by the pretentions of his arrogant mind.10

This different perspective on reality and rationality is the basis for the fundamental difference in the role that the state takes in utopias and dystopias. In a utopian world, the state acts as a transcending agent. It provides the path for individuals to reach some greater good. Reality is defined in perfect terms; the state can do no wrong because it is a perfect institution. Individuals do not object to the authority of the state because they understand its central function in the realization of an ultimate good. Dystopias, on the other hand, assume that individuals will object to a completely autonomous state. Individuals will not understand the perfect nature of the state; they will object to it because they do not understand its ultimate aim. The problem, of course, is that the perfect nature of the state is corrupted by its efforts to transcend the irrational nature of man. When the state intervenes on behalf of the Good, it does so forcefully because it is a human invention replete with all the negative characteristics possessed by man. The essential difference between utopias and dystopias, then, is their perspective on the nature of man. Utopians fiat understand and compliance; dystopians coerce these ends.

10Walsh, p. 162.

Critical Method

As indicated in the introduction, the comparison in this essay between the Republic and 1984 will rely on two concepts from Burke: Definition of Man, and the Iron Law of History. The purpose of this section is to briefly describe these concepts, to explore some relationships between the two, and to explain how and why they are useful for my analysis. Each term will be examined in turn.

Burke defines man as:

> . . .(T)he symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol misusing) animal inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative) seperated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making goaded by the spirit of hierachy (or moved by the sense of order) and rotten with perfection.11

This definition is important for two reasons. First, it implies the necessarily irrational nature of humankind. How, for example, would humans fit as symbol misusing creatures if they were completely rational? For Burke, human symbollicity is what seperates humanity from what may have been the world's only true utopia: nature.

Far more important than Burke's assumption about the rational nature of humans is his charge that they are "rotten with perfection." By this, Burke means that humans inevitably strive to perfect the world around them:

> The principle of perfection is central to the nature of language as motive. The mere desire to name something by its proper name, or to speak a language in its distinctive way is intrinsically

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11Burke, "Definition of Man," p. 16.

> perfectionist. . . .There is a principle of perfection implicit in the nature of symbol systems; and in keeping with his nature as a symbol-using animal, man is moved by this principle.12

Herein lies a critical component of Burke. The problem with perfection, of course, is that people will always strive for it even when it is not obtainable. The desire for perfection blinds humankind to possible the outcomes of his/her course:

> There is a kind of "terministic compulsion" to carry out the implications of one's terminology, quite as, if an astronomer discovered by his observations and computations that a certain wandering body was likely to hit the earth and destroy us, he would nonetheless feel compelled to argue for the correctness of his computations, despite the ominousness of the outcome.13

In other words, people strive for "perfection" regardless of the real outcome of a particular act. In that regard, utopian motives can produce dystopian ends because a particular goal may embrace what are, in reality, anti-utopian values.

In rhetorical terms, the concept of "rotten with perfection" means that rhetoric is a tool of corruption. It influences the shape of reality, and it does so when directed by those who are carrying out their terministic compulsion to complete their started tasks.

This conception of humanity leads to, or at least is associated with, Burke's notion of the Iron Law of History:

> Here are the steps
> In the Iron Law of History

12Ibid, pp. 16-7.

13Ibid, p. 19.

That welds Order and Sacrifice:

Order leads to Guilt
(for who can keep commandments:)
Guilt needs Redemption
(for who would not be cleansed!)

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill)14

The Iron Law of History, then, implies a completion much in the same way that the Definition of Man does. The Cult of the Kill is the completion of order. In any society, order will inevitably be threatened. When an individual breaks his or her covenant with society, disorder reigns, whether it is on an individual or societal level. Order can be restored by victimage; the covenant is repaired only when blame is in some way assigned. This Ritual of the Kill, or victimage, can take one of two forms: mortification or scapegoating. Either an individual is mortified (that is, he or she repents without compulsion), or they become society's scapegoat. In either instance, blame is assessed and order is restored. Griffin best summarized Burke:

> In sum: wherever there is Order there is hierarchy; wherever there is hierachy there must be communication, and hence "mystery"; and whereever there is "mystery" there must be an understanding--the understanding that makes piety possible. But the maintenance of piety involves the need for obedience--which is to say, the painful need for self-control (self-restraint, self-moderation). And out of this obligation comes the possibility of disobedience; for men are by nature ambitious, Faustian, "rotten with perfection"; . . . .For men are by nature charged with symbols; and by nature they cannot bear Guilt ("for who would not be

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14Burke, The Rhetoric of Religion (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1961), pp. 4-5.

> cleansed"). And hence, inevitably, they will dream of salvation, the transformation of their condition, a state of Redemption: will envision, consciously or unconsciously (being "rotten with perfection"), an ideal Order--"heaven," paradise, the "good society," Utopia.15

It should be clear at this stage that these Burkian concepts are related. The cycle of order, disorder, and order depend on humankind's never ending drive for perfection. Rhetoric is a vehicle that people use to strive for perfection; it disrupts and restores order in the continual search for the perfect world.

Why Burke? What do these concepts have to do with utopian and dystopian rhetoric? Before answering that question, I should note that my choice of critical methods is heavily influenced by Edwin Black's work on rhetorical criticism.16 In his seminal work on criticism, Black warns any prospective critic against the "cookie cutter" approach. That is, a critic should avoid forcing a fit between a particular method of criticism and a particular work or set of works. To force the relationship would be tantamount to describing rather than critiquing the work(s), and probably doing so inaccurately. Instead, Black argues, the critic should employ an emic method of criticism, or one that is appropriate for the particular work(s) based on an intrinsic

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15Leland M. Griffin, "A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Movements," Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke (Univ. of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1969), p. 460.

16Edwin Black, "A Note on Theory and Practice in Rhetorical Criticism," Western Journal of Speech Communication 44 (Fall 1980) 331-336.

analysis of the texts and issues concerned. The critical method, therefore, should flow from the critic's understanding of the discourse and intrinsically related issues.

Burke, then, is appropriate for utopian and dystopian criticism because his concepts are an essential part of the stasis of the disagreement between utopian and dystopian writers. His notion of "rotten with perfection" addresses the issue of the rationality of the human race. His Iron Law of History addresses the issue of order, describing both how it is disrupted and how it is maintained. In short, Burke provides a framework from which to evaluate the similarities and differences between utopian and dystopian rhetoric.

The Republic and 1984: an Intrinsic Comparison and Critique

This section is devoted to an intrinsic comparison of two works, Plato's Republic and Orwell's 1984. I will try to underscore some central similarities and differences between the two works. In particular, I will focus on the contrast between two elements in each work: the use of language in each society and the use of force by each state. By focusing on these elements, I hope to demonstrate that Plato's Republic embodies the archtypical utopian world and, by contrast, that Orwell's 1984 depicts the "perfect" dystopia. I will then relate each work to the

characteristics of utopia or dystopia as those characteristics have been developed in section one. The contrast in utopian and dystopian characteristics that is illuminated by the comparison of these works should serve to explain the subversiveness that is explicit in 1984 and inevitable in the Republic. Finally I will evaluate the utopian and dystopian characteristics of each work from the Burkian perspective described in the method section.

Doublethink as a Reality Check or Who is Guarding the Guardians?: Education as Thought Control in the Republic

The security of the Party in 1984 depends largely on a process termed doublethink. Children are taught from early on to engage in doublethink, a process whereby reality is constantly updated. Insofar as it was different from today, yesterday never really existed. What is true today was true yesterday and will be true tomorrow. If reality is different tomorrow, then today is amended so as to reflect tomorrow's reality. In that regard, nothing ever really changes. The present is the past, and as the future becomes the present; so too will the past become the present.

The key, of course, to doublethink, is that it is an instinctive process. When reality changes, the people of 1984 must understand the new present as if it really were the past without ever stopping to regard the old past. Perhaps the best illustration of the concept can be found in

Orwell's description of the transition from one enemy to another in Oceania's neverending war:

> On the sixth day of Hate Week, after the processions, the speeches, the shouting, the singing, the banners, the posters, the films, the waxworks, the rolling of drums and squealing of trumpets, the tramp of marching feet, the grinding of the caterpillars of tanks, the roar of massed planes, the booming of guns--after six days of this, when the great orgasm was quivering to its climax and the general hatred of Eurasia had boiled up into such delirium that if the crowd would have got their hands on the two thousand Eurasian war criminals who were to be publicly hanged on the last day of the proceedings, they would unquestionably have torn them to pieces--at just this moment it had been announced that Oceania was not after all at war with Eurasia. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Eurasia was an ally.17

For this sort of tremendous change to work there has to be a conditioned, simaltaneous disregard for the past and attention to the present. In effect the present has to become the past:

> There was, or course, no admission that any change had taken place. Merely it became known, with extreme suddenness and everywhere at once, that Eastasia and not Eurasia was the enemy. . . .Without words said, a wave of understanding rippled through the crowd. Oceania was at war with Eastasia! The next moment there was a tremendous comotion. The banners and posters with which the square was decorated were all wrong! Quite half of them had the wrong faces on them. It was sabotage! The agents of Goldstein had been at work! There was a riotous interlude while posters were ripped from the walls, banners torn to shreds and trampled underfoot. The spies performed prodigies of activities in clambering over the rooftops and cutting the streamers that fluttered from the chimneys. But within two or three minutes it was all over. The orator, still gripping the neck of the microphone, his sholders hunched forward, and free hand clawing at the air, had gone straight on with his speech. One minute more, and the feral roars of rage were again busting

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17George Orwell, 1984 (Signet Classic: New York, 1949), p. 148.

> from the crowd. The Hate continued exactly as before, except that the target had been changed.18

The implications of such an indoctrinated ability to dispose of the past are significant. Doublethink is the ultimate protection of the Party. Without a past, there can be no proof that anything that the Party does is wrong. All future actions meet historical standards for what is right percisely because the Party controls what went beforehand. By controlling the past, the Party effectively guarantees its ability to repress its subjects with impunity.

Here, too, lies the imposed order perspective that is characteristic of dystopias. Newspeak is a sort of rationality control, the ultimate power of the state:

> Newspeak is the Orwellian equivalent of a lobotomy. It deprives men of the words by which they can think connected and rational thoughts and communicate them. At the period of the book Oldspeak and Newspeak are both current, but Newspeak is rapidly gaining and will soon be the only language. When the time comes, a man may still feel emotions of discontent and resentment, but he will not be able to analyse them--analysis requires words--nor share his feeling with others. If there is no word for freedom, how can men conspire and fight and die for it? How can they even know it is what they want?19

In other words, the control of language is a central component of preventing disorder, or, from the perspective of the state in a dystopia, controlling the irrationality of man. This concept is certainly interwoven with the role of power in a dystopian world. It is the control of language

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18Ibid, pp. 148-50.

19Walsh, pp. 108-09.

that facilitates order and, at the same time, empowers the state:

> Orwell has hit on a simple premise that can hardly be denied: political freedom, freedom as a way of life, is of use only to people who, unlike Julia, have complex thoughts which they can articulate. Writing the English language well does not assure democratic values, but the general collapse of literary skills will sooner or later bring on political degeneracy. "The English language becomes ugly and inaccurate because we have foolish thoughts, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier to have foolish thoughts." If the language gets flatter, coarser--more regular or perverted by orthodox catchwords--then the challenge of literacy is diminished. But so, then, is the chance to deserve civil liberties.20

The masses are easy to control; they do not possess the capability to understand their plight and organize opposition accordingly. In that regard, the control of language serves to shape reality:

> In 1984 as in 1984, the state that makes no difference works by maintaining a monotonous and trivial public frenzy. In Oceania, nothing stands out. Doublethink nullifies thought itself; Newspeak replaces the expressive differences of language; all wear the same outfit, eat the same food, speak the same slogans, watch and hear the same things on the telescreens. And yet the world of 1984 is not made tranquil by this sameness, nor is this sameness, certainly, the result of calm. Although approaching perfect stasis, Oceania does not approach a state of rest, but is explosive, noisy, frantic, hectic, making no difference through excessive pseudo-difference: bombardments, torture, daily bouts of managed hate, sudden "bulletins," wild parades, unceasing panic, music, celebration, war, rallies, and so on.21

Language, then, serves as a tool for defining reality; in 1984 the Party uses language to control the threat to order

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20Bernard Avishai, "Orwell and the English Language," 1984 Revisited (Harper & Rowe: New York, 1983), p. 63.

21Mark Crispin Miller, "The Fate of 1984," 1984 Revisited, pp. 42-3.

that is implicit in an irrational perspective on human nature.

Plato's ideal world is divided into three classes. The ruling class is composed of Philosopher-Kings who evidence exceptional aptitude for leadership in a variety of contexts. Members of the Guardian class serve as a bridge between Philosopher-Kings and the masses. The Guardians form the basis for this comparison. Their selection and situation is similar to the members of the Party in 1984.

Plato devised his own brand of doublethink in perscribing the education for the Guardians. In particular, he describes a system where certain elements of the past are censored. Clearly, Plato is interested in designing a curriculum that contributes to a Guardian's understanding of the Good. Similarly, too, Plato is concerned with creating a positive influence on the Guardians. In other words, he calls specifically for eliminating unwanted influences and for the creation of desired ones:

> Then shall we simply allow our children to listen to any stories that anyone happens to make up, and so receive into their minds ideas often the very opposite of those we shall think they ought to have when they are grown up?. . . .
> It seems, then, our first business will be to supervise the making of fables and legends, rejecting all which are unsatisfactory; and we shall induce nurses and mothers to tell their children only those which we have approved, and to think more of moulding their souls with these stories than they now do of rubbing their limbs to make them strong and shapely. Most of the stories now in use must be discarded.22

22The Republic of Plato (Oxford Univ. Press: London, 1973), Francis MacDonald Cornford, Trans., p. 69.

Plato's strategy for educating the Guardians is, of course, not doublethink in the complete sense of the word. Instead, the censorship in the Republic is essentially a one time requirement. Plato works from the assumption that once his system is set into place, further revision would not be required. The Guardians do not have to learn to instinctively disregard what has gone before. The sort of thought control implied by the first stages of a Platonic education is, nonetheless, as effective as doublethink in dictating the course of reality. The Guardians shape their reality in terms of their education. Their lifelong training is grounded in what they learn through the first eighteen years of controlled education.

The similarities between a Platonic and an Orwellian education are significant for a number of reasons. First of all, as I have already argued, those who control the past control the future. Like Orwell, Plato has devised a system where the security of the state will never be threatened. It is a system where the positive is accentuated and the negative suppressed. In such an environment, the state will enjoy absolute, perpetual control. In his discussion of the Republic, Frye has articulated this utopian concept:

> Considered as a final or definitive social ideal, the utopia is a static society; and most utopias have built-in safeguards against radical alteration of the structure. This feature gives it a somewhat forbidding quality to a reader not yet committee to it. An imaginary dialogue between a utopia-writer and such a reader might begin somewhat as follows: Reader: "I can see that this society might work, but I wouldn't want to live in it." Writer: "What you mean is that you don't want your present ritual habits disturbed.

> My utopia would feel different from the inside, where the ritual habits would be customary and so carry with them a sense of freedom rather than constraint."23

Ultimately, Frye concludes that the Republic is a classic example of this sort of self-defined reality:

> Plato's imaginary Republic is the ideal society that we do not live in but ought to be living in. Not many readers would so accept it, for Plato's state has in full measure the forbidding quality that we have noted as a characteristic of utopias. Surely most people today would see in its rigorous autocracy, its unscrupulous use of lies for propoganda, its ruthlessly censored art, and its subordination of all the creative and productive life of the state to a fanatical military caste, all the evils that we call totalitarian.24

Additionally, Plato does not account for the corrupting influence of reality control. He is attempting to devise a status hierarchy which is based on intelligence, ability, and wisdom. The problem, of course, is that once the system is entrenched it must be perfect. It must control doubt completely and must select only those who are truly capable of fulfilling the responsibillities of a Guardian. If it fails, then the unity that Plato depends on for the success of the Guardian class is lost and the Guardians will never grow to grasp the Good. In that sense, the world of 1984 is Plato's Republic run astray. Plato is able to prevent that because he controls his own reality. Only the most capable become Guardians because Plato excludes others by definition. Similarly, Orwell's world is a chaotic one percisely because characters like Winston Smith are capable

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23Northrop Frye, Utopias and Utopian Thought, p. 31.

24Ibid, p. 33.

of independent thought, despite the wishes of the Party. Ultimately, the same conditions that set the stage for utopia in Plato provide the foundation for oppression in Orwell.

The Guardians as Thought Police: Who Would have Imagined it?

Like any autocratic or authoritarian state, the Party in 1984 depends to a large extent on a force of almost omniscient law enforcers known as the Thought Police. The Thought Police were primarily responsible for detecting and punishing those guilty of thoughtcrime. Virtually any movement or action that was inconsistent with Party aims was punishable by horrors too difficult to imagine. The important point is not, however, that the Thought Police tortured and killed people. Rather, the key to understanding the rhetorical significance of 1984 and its relation to the Republic is the understanding that punishment was tied to expression and thought. The Party had to maintain power. What better way to do so than to suppress thought and expression, and ultimately to win over opponents by breaking their will to fight. It is the complete control not only of language and symbol usage but of thought, the very essence of the soul, which empowers the state so completely. Orwell described the miniscule actions that could invite the inquiry of the Thought Police through the character Smith:

> Your worst enemy, he reflected, was your own nervous system. At any moment the tension inside you was liable to translate itself into some visible symptom. *He thought of a man whom he had passed in the street a* few weeks back: a quite ordinary-looking man, a Party member, aged thirty-five or fourty, tallish and thin, carrying a brief case. They were a few meters apart when the left side of the man's face was suddenly contorted by a sort of spasm. It was only a twitch, a quiver, rapid as the clicking of a camera shutter, but obviously habitual. He remembered thinking at the time: the poor devil is done for. And what was frightening was that the action was quite possibly unconscious.25

The key point, of course, is that the Party persues power for its own sake. Walsh ellaborates:

> It (1984) is a dingy world, rundown and inefficient in everything except the exercise of power. . . .Sadistic brutality is no longer merely a political necessity, but a satisfaction in its own right, whose image is the boot eternally on the helpless face. Power is the supreme joy, almost the only one, and the way to feel powerful is to inflict pain on those who cannot escape it.26

The power of the Party is, of course, absolute. Miller describes the total, inescapable, nature of power in Orwell's world:

> Once the corporate will to power, embodied in the Party, fills the vacuum left behind by God, all of life's differentiating fictions, theories, patterns, myths, principles collapse and disappear into obliterating current of the Oceanic State: "If you want a picture of the future," O'Brien suggests, "imagine a boot stamping on a human face--forever."27

Like so many of history's secret police forces, the Thought Police existed primarily to spy on citizens of the state, particularly Party members. They were aided by the

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25Orwell, p. 54.

26Walsh, p. 107-08.

27Miller, p. 40.

telescreen, a two way listening and receiving device developed as one of the "technological benefits" of the era. Thus, they could watch every move and listen to every sound of Party members. Without some sort of spying capacity, the Thought Police would never be able to carry out their objectives.

In the Republic the Guardians practice perhaps a more subtle version of thought control. Of course, Plato does not have the benefit of a telescreen. But he is concerned with monitoring and uncovering the actions of the masses. Clearly, Plato expects virtuous actions on the part of the educated masses:

> Moreover, when a community has once made a good start, its growth proceeds in a sort of cycle. If a sound system of nurture and education is maintained, it produces men of a good disposition; and these in their turn, taking advantage of such education, develop into better men than their forebears, and their breeding qualities improve among the rest, as may be seen in animals. . . .28

He intends, however, to guard against contrary intentions:

> In short, then, those who keep watch over our commonwealth must take the greatest care not to overlook the least infraction of the rule against any innovation upon the established system of education either of the body or of the mind. When the poet says that men care most for the newest air that hovers on the singer's lips, they will be afraid lest he be taken not merely to mean new songs, but to be commending a new style of music. Such innovation is not to be commended, nor should the poet be so understood. The introduction of novel fashions in music is a thing to beware of as endangering the whole fabric of society, whose most important conventions are unsettled by any revolution in that quarter.29

28The Republic, pp. 114-15.

29Ibid, p. 115.

This control is, obviously, not as complete as that practiced by the Thought Police. It targets, nonetheless, actions as trivial as those sought after in 1984. Plato is very clear in indicating that the "least infraction" will be noted. There is a sense of both uniformity and finality in Plato's world. He clearly intends to prevent any deviation from his ideal system. While the Guardians do not have at their disposal the techniques available to the Thought Police, they do appear to have a similar purpose.

The enforcer like role taken on by Orwell's Thought Police and by Plato's Guardians is significant primarily because it provides a means for insuring the efficacy of the thought control procedures inherent within the two systems. Plato is essentially up front with his motive for assigning this task to the Guardians; he is clear about his desire for no deviation from his utopian system. He works from the assumption, of course, that education will ultimately eliminate the need for this Guardian function.

Plato's admission that the Guardians must check the masses seems to have serious implications for his utopia. If the masses are capable of imaginative thought, then has the system properly chosen its Guardians and Philosopher-Kings? Furthermore, if the masses are really capable of introducing unique concepts, then how will the system prevent people from doing evil? In other words, Plato's world is not a perfect one unless it is completely successful in achieving uniform thought. Once that goal is

accomplished, there is really little difference between Plato's utopia and Orwell's hell.

A Burkian Perspective

Thusfar we have discovered that Orwell's world of 1984 is similar in many respects to a dystopia; some have described it as the "perfect anti-utopia."30 The state is power hungry for its own ends, and it directs reality for its subjects by manipulating language. In that way, an Orwellian state maintains control over otherwise irrational man, thereby preserving order. Conversely, Plato's Republic represents the perfect world. Power is a necessary tool of the state; it enables individuals to transcend their present existence so that they may understand the Good. Reality, then, is self-defining. The state does not have to coerce cooperation and understanding from its subjects; it fiats these characteristics.

Each of these works, then, illustrates key elements of a Burkian worldview. Both are rotten with perfection. Both act to prevent disorder, to maintain order. And, in each circumstance, there is a way of dealing with disruptioins in the normal order of things. There is a way of restoring the power of the state. For Orwell, force is the method by which the covenant between the individual and society is maintained. Indeed, Orwell relies on a force so powerful, so terrifying, that it transforms the individual. In that

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30See for instance Walsh, p. 107; Sullivan, p. 46.

sense, Winston Smith begins the cycle, an individual, rotten with perfection, insistent:

> (Winston's) main source of strength is a stubborn certainty that truth is truth, regardless of ideology; for instance, no decree of the Party can cause 2 + 2 to equal 5. There are few passages in fiction more terrifying, more indicative of the ultimate, metaphysical degredation to which a man can be brought, than the scene in which Winston is finally trained to believe, really believe, that whatever the Party says is truth is truth. His salvation, and the cleansing of a threatened society, depends on his being wholeheartedly converted to collective solipsism.31

Having lost the battle, he ends the cycle by becoming one with the state:

> In 1984, O'Brien says: "the old civilization claimed that they were founded on love and justice. Ours is founded upon hatred." Not quite so. There is an affective tie that remains and Winston confesses it at the end: "He loved Bit Brother." He is therefore able to participate vicariously in the power that intoxicates the Inner Party.32

And thus, salvation is complete. Order is restored; the state is again supreme:

> This is the beginning of (Winston's) redemption. This is the final and complete abomination of desolation. There is little more to say about Winston. He becomes a berry, teary admirer of Big Brother. The fire that briefly burned between him and the girl is burned out and purged. He is a dutiful zombie, an un-man.33

Much in the same way that Burke would bring any drama to a close, Orwell ends 1984. The state is all powerful. But its power is not from brute force alone. It is a power to change the essence of men's souls.

31Walsh, pp. 110-11.

32Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "The Goldon Country: Sex and Love in 1984," 1984 Revisited, p. 56.

33Walsh, pp. 111-12.

Plato's perfect world, too, is plagued by the need to completely subordinate the individual to the state. For his purposes, Plato assumes away the corruptable nature of mankind. In that way, he eliminates the problems posed by irrationality and thus solves the individual's bent toward perfection. Frye concludes:

> Plato admits that dictatorial tyranny is very like his state-pattern entrusted to the wrong men. But to assume much of a difference between tyrany and Plato's state we should have to believe in the perfectibility of intellectuals, which neither history nor experience gives us much encouragement to do.34

This solution is not without its costs. Instead, it shifts the drive for perfection from the individual to the state. And it is this drive which eventually corrupts the Republic. Davis articulated this Aristitillian notion:

> The keynote of Plato's (or Socrates') ideal state for Aristotle is its unity; a unity which to Aristotle is bad because it becomes total, perfect. "The cause of Socrates's error lies in his false premise about unity; certainly there must be some unity in a state as in a household, but not an absolute total unity." Indeed, unity is the Republic's self-possessed ideal: "Is there anything worse for a state than to be split or disunited? or anything better than cohesion or unity?" The ideal state for Plato is an organism of total unity such that "the whole is aware of the feeling of the parts." The elaborate and detailed regulation of the relations between the Guardian class and the rest of society are designed to promote, and are only justified by the promotion of, this perfect, total unity or order.35

The unanswered, or perhaps unanswerable, question is what, if anything, will constitute salvation for the state? It is

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34Frye, p. 33.

35J.C. Davis, Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian writing 1516-1700 (Cambridge Univ. Press: Cmbridge, 1981), p. 40.

Plato's failure to provide a solution for the Republic that threatens to turn utopia on its head.

To this point, I have tried to build the case that the similarities between 1984 and the Republic imply a necessarily evil end for both worlds. Given that, the rhetorical implications for this analysis seem obvious. Utopian and dystopian rhetorics differ, primarily, on their approach to the rationality of mankind. That relationship is evident, both in the characteristics of the two worldviews, as well as in their rhetorical aspects as examined from a Burkian perspective. Utopian and dystopian rhetoric serves the same end. From either perspective, rhetoric is a tool with which reality is defined and order is maintained. If the dystopians are right about their view of rationality, then utopian rhetoric only serves to mask dystopian ends. In any case, the alternative world views represented by utopian and dystopian works inherently depend on manipulating rhetoric. Without it, neither perspective could function.

Conclusion

Plato and Orwell both posit visionary worlds, one where humans are virtuous and understand the Good and the other where they are pawns in a neverending chess game. Despite these overarching differences in philosophical assumptions, Plato's world is essentially a front for the tyrany found in 1984. Plato is able to avoid Orwell's nightmare only

because he can define the reality of the Republic. The world of the Republic is a good and virtuous one percisely because Plato defines it in that manner. Orwell has the benefit of 2,500 years of mankind's history with which to color his conception of the future. In that sense, Orwell paints a much more realistic picture of life in a world operating under Platonic assumptions. Ultimately, humanity controls his own destiny, whether it be Orwellian, Platonic, or some middle ground. Irving Howe best articulated our options:

> "There is [little] question of avoiding collectivism. The only question is whether it is to be founded on willing cooperation or on the machine gun"--that is, whether it will be democratic or authoritarian. This puts the matter with admirable precision. 1984 shows us what might happen if "the machine gun" triumphs; but the other choice remains to us.36

36Irving Howe, "1984: Enigmas of Power," 1984 Revisited, p. 18.